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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
Operations Center

Afternoon Brief

Wednesday, January 23, 2002
1530 EST

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VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION ORGANIZES ANTI-CHAVEZ MARCH

(SBU) A coalition of opposition political parties, unions and business leaders organized the mass march, estimated to have exceeded 50,000 participants, confirms the Embassy. Chavez supporters held a similarly large counter-demonstration. Although the opposition march succeeded beyond expectations, Chavez may point to the counter-demonstration as evidence of continued public support. The two peaceful demonstrations, held on the anniversary of the birth of Venezuelan democracy, reflect the polarization of Venezuelan political life. (Watch/Embassy Caracas telcon, Watch/Embassy Caracas e-mail, AP)

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